

## To be Devoured Whole by GothicCheshire

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**Summary:** What would you do if your body wasn't yours, if all that you have ever believed in was used against you only to torment you, and your every thought could be your last?

## 1. Maine

*This, ladies and gentlemen, is an AU. This is a BIIIIIIIG AU. This is the product of my initial impression that Bob Gray/Pennywise was actually a separate entity to It. The thought stuck, and eventually budded into this. This is something that I have beaten over the head, crumbled into pieces, and molded into this...thing. I give you the story of a Bob Gray who was a separate entity that was eventually swallowed whole.*

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There were not many things that happened in Weston, Maine that were private. While Weston was growing, it was still a small town by all accounts, and so when Bob Gray's wife died giving birth to their son, who turned out to be stillborn, everyone knew. The man was a wreck. A quiet miserable wreck and they were surprised that he had not followed them out. He had wanted that baby; he and his wife had wanted it with all their hearts, and they were both taken away.

Gone.

He was in so much pain. He wanted to smile, he wanted to laugh, he wanted to see them laugh, her laugh, his son laugh. It had been a boy. He would sit at the park in his suit, a bottle clutched weakly in one hand, watching the children and their parents run and play and *laugh*. He almost wanted to weep. He had wanted that. So much.

But Bob was not one to stay bitter for long and when the circus came in he found his calling while watching the clowns. The children loved them, laughing and following the garishly-dressed men and women as they handed out balloons and juggled and laughed. The clowns with their painted-on smiles, their painted-on joy. It would be perfect. He would get what he had always wanted, and so he watched, and so he learned.

When the clowns from the circus understood his plight, listened to his tale and the men and women underneath the makeup understood what had happened, they were more than willing to bring him into the fold. He was looking for an escape; they were willing to give him one. They taught him everything he needed to know, grinning and laughing at the way his hoarse voice would crack awful jokes and the

corny laugh that would follow. They knew that his delivery was perfect, said he had a knack for it. He loved the sound of that.

He had never had a knack for anything.

Soon they declared him ready and asked what he had in mind for a stage name. So it was that the character 'Pennywise the Dancing Clown' was born and the children began to love him, even more so when they realized they knew the man under the heavy makeup and ridiculous costume. While he was known for being a bit of a drunk, he was a friendly one, one of the reasons he had turned to it in the first place. If he couldn't be happy sober, well...he'd found another way, if only temporary.

The circus eventually travelled on and Bob went with it, leaving the only memories he had behind. No family and the only friends his fellow circus dwellers. He was well and truly cut off, but a patch of bitterness remained in his heart, no matter how hard he tried to shake it. It was there when he entertained the children, doing tricks and telling jokes. It was there when he watched their parents, and one day it was there in the wrong town.

Derry was another small town, but whereas the people in Weston were more willing to laugh, the people in Derry somehow seemed...shut off. They weren't so much unenthused as they were wary. It was not long before the rest of the circus began to have a bit of understanding as to why. Something was...off. They weren't all that sure what it was, even; just something seemed troubling, tickling at the edges of their consciousness. The one who felt it most was Bob.

It was a tugging, leeching sensation, something that made him edgy and slightly hindered him from his usual over-the-top performances. The others noticed, but they had maintained a discreet distance over the months they had known him. He just reeked of sadness when they talked to him and attempted to see how he was, what his story was. But he was successful at his job.

At the moment Gray stood in the silvery-white of his clown costume, orange pompoms on the front for buttons and oversized orange shoes feeling more familiar to him than he figured they should. The clown makeup was still something he was having difficulty with. He figured

he would never quite get used to the fake, painted-on grin.

There was one other thing he was known for aside from his rough voice and his jokes and tricks; it was the balloons, and how the children loved the balloons! Pennywise was popular amongst them for the colorful things, reds, and yellows and blues, all bright and happy colors that he would give out with a smile and a laugh.

But still the feeling of uneasiness grew, and still he was cut off, even though Gray did not know it. Or, they thought he did not know it. He was not blind, and while he had at one point been a drunk, with his new purpose, bringing those children such laughter...he had been sober. He could see it. But he never said anything, and that bitter feeling was strengthened.

It was this very feeling that caught the attention of something in Derry that was only just beginning to awaken. This something woke up nearly every twenty-five years, and It always woke up hungry.

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Bob Gray crouched in front of the crying child, his smile kept friendly, being sure to make it reach his eyes, a balloon held out in front of him like a shield. The first time this had happened he had been surprised-surely all children should like clowns. And yet he had discovered this was not the case. There were some who were terrified of them, and he had learned how to deal with it.

The boy in front of him was in a corner of Derry that seemed as though it would never be properly removed of all wildlife, let alone properly drained. It was green, and very pretty. *But something seemed off about it...*

"Aw, come on, bucko, don't you want a balloon? It's red, such a pretty shade of red; do you like red, Timmy?"

Timmy looked up at him in surprise, unaware and unsure how he knew his name, but he stopped crying, looking at the balloon that bobbed in front of him with uncertain curiosity. "How...how did you know my name?"

"I, Timmy, am Pennywise the Dancing Clown. Your father wanted to

apologize for not being able to come to the circus, but he wanted me to give you this." Bob did not say that the boy's father had desperately run into the tent, nearly frantic with worry because he could not find his son. Timmy had left home and his father had been certain he would not be seen again. Bob couldn't let another man go through that feeling; he had been looking for the boy all day, and he had finally found him.

The boy wiped his eyes carefully, looking at the clown, looking at the balloon, and slowly, carefully reached his hand out, not to take the balloon as Bob had originally suspected, but for a handshake. Gray let out his usual rasping laugh which made more people laugh with him than he could count, and grasped the hand, shaking firmly as the boy looked at him solemnly and stated quietly, "Pleased to meet you, Mr. Pennywise, sir..."

"And a wonderful pleasure to meet you. Do you want that balloon now? It floats!"

Timmy looked up at the red floating object and looked back down at him, wrinkling his nose slightly. "I don't like red."

This made Pennywise laugh all the harder, and he grinned at him. "Well then, let's see about finding you a different colored balloon then, shall we?"

Timmy couldn't help but grin back. With that, easy as pie, the two of them walked back to the rest of the circus and the father who was waiting. When the man spotted his son he fell to his knees, nearly in tears, thanking the clown who had brought him back, accepting the cheerful blue balloon that the clown handed him, listening to the cheesy introduction, and taking his son home.

Bob went through the rest of the day knowing, just knowing that something was off. He couldn't see it, but he could feel it. Something that made the hairs on the back of his neck prickle, but like any true performer, he never let it show. He could not afford to- their happiness was his, and were he not to make them happy he would be feeling just as bereft.

But, as is the nature of things, the circus eventually came to an end,

people leaving to go home and Gray began the usual task of packing the various odds and ends away, not quite ready to travel on, not quite leaving everything helter-skelter. They removed makeup and stage props easily, those that had been working on gathering people to the circus, the clowns being the main ones, retreating to their trailers and tents.

Gray had barely set foot into his trailer when he realized that something was very wrong. He didn't know what it was; it was somehow beyond his understanding, but he could feel it, brooding, twisted, slipping at the edge of his consciousness. He had a moment to take a careful step forward, and then everything went black, deep, dark, impenetrable black.

It was deep, total, and somehow there was a voice whispering in it, but the whisper was slowly growing, turning to an indecipherable mass, but one thing was repeated, a question. A question without words, deep, throbbing, and then everything was gone. It was only later that he thought that he had heard something else, something somehow even deeper, but for the moment there was nothing.

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*So....you're Bob Gray...my, what a sad, sad life you've had...*

*What? What is this, who...who are you?*

*I am your mind. You've been ignoring me lately; I figured I'd remind you that I existed.*

*What?*

*Nah, I'm just kidding. As if I could be something as pathetic as your mind. No, I, I am Eternal. You...well, you were merely dust. Now...now you're something more. You're me, well...in me, and you're going to help me.*

*How...who are you?*

*I am everything you were ever afraid of.*

*And it was true. Bob realized that it was true; the darkness, while whole, was somehow illuminated, and in that light...in that light he could feel*

*something stirring. Something evil, ancient, something that awakened some primal instinct to flee, but he could not move.*

*He could not move, something holding him in place, feeling the waves of malevolence and amusement rippling across, ripping into his mind, laughing its way into his heart, and in a moment of terror and pain, something tore, and he knew no more.*

...

Bob Gray woke up with a shout, making the rest of the troupe of clowns gathered around him jump. He sat up, looking around, fear in his eyes, and then he realized where he was, who was around him, and slumped back to the ground, heart hammering in his chest, mouth turned down at the corners.

"Cripes, Bob, you almost gave us a heart attack. You alright?"

Gray stared around at them, feeling the sticky and uncomfortable feeling of sweat mixing with the clown makeup and smearing down his face. "Yeah...yeah, I'm okay." As he said it, he found it to be true. He was alive, there was no voice, there was no darkness...there was none of that *light*. He gave a slight smirk, shaking his head slightly and then laughed, "Probably overworking myself."

"Psh, yeah right, Gray; you do the bare minimum and then you're off."

They laughed, safety and familiarity held in the sound; how Bob *loved* laughter.

But in the darkness, when everything was quiet and no one was moving, and no one was laughing, Gray began to see things in the shadows, and feel a stirring of true fear, *and someone else's amusement*.

And then, it began to rain.

## 2. In the Rain

Sorry it took so long people. School is kicking my butt among other things...Enjoy!

...

The rain did not let up. The animals, particularly those of the feline variety, were nearly ceaseless in their cries of protest. The caravan was attempting to leave Derry, hide from the rain and wind. The rocking and creaking of his trailer made it all seem that much more difficult to stand. The circus was drowning, and Bob could scarcely believe it.

He could scarcely believe plenty of things. He lay in his cot, staring up at the ceiling of the trailer, and watched the shadows twisting and darkening, and wondered and marveled at the changes to their shapes. Black and almost alive in their movements as they danced across the ceiling. There was nothing he could do aside from lean back and stare. He had no need and no desire to move, he had not moved in hours.

The pitter-patter of the rain on the roof was slowly growing into a dull roar, the crash and explosion of thunder almost drowned out. *Like everything else here, like everything else...* he thought, a sigh blowing out through his nose. He knew he should move, but he also knew something else.

There was a monster under his bed.

A while ago he would have thought the idea childish and ridiculous, but now he found himself positive, with every fiber of his being, that monsters did exist. He had been visited by one too many times to believe otherwise. Not just any monster, but *the* monster. The greatest, nastiest, ugliest monster in existence, and It, not just 'it', but 'It', liked to visit Bob. It liked to talk to him, whisper to him, and just about terrify him. It knew everything about Gray, and It never ceased to remind him of that fact, mocking him, his dead wife, his dead child.

In a fit of humor and insane giggling, the thing had made Its home

under the bed. Gray didn't understand why It had chosen him, why It had done nothing yet but mock and scorn him, but he realized that he would probably never know, and so did not question. There were too many other things to question. One of them was, would they manage to get out of here alive? For some reason, Gray didn't think so. This fact made him laugh, the laughter of Pennywise, of the clown he dressed up as, the clown who was always laughing, who could make children and adults laugh along, who was a hero.

"Something funny, Bob?" There was that voice again, *Its* voice, and Bob couldn't help but shudder.

"We're all going to die. I just realized that."

"Certainly a definite possibility..."

"It'll be your fault if we do."

"Ohhhh, that's not very nice, throwing out accusations like that. Besides, I'm under your bed, not in the sky; how could I cause it to rain?"

"Because you aren't really under my bed. I could get up from here right now and move over to any part of my trailer and you wouldn't be able to get me."

"Oh? Are you quite sure of that, Bob?"

The fact of the matter was, Bob wasn't sure. He could only lay in his cot unable to move, barely able to breathe from the fear that was constricting his chest and heart. He laughed anyway, and rolled himself out of bed. There was no hand, no touch from something scaly or slimy, and he knew he had been right. It wasn't a comforting thought.

"Well, what do you know, you were sure. You weren't exactly right, but you were sure."

"I suppose that makes all the difference, doesn't it?"

"Better believe it, bucko..."

"What do you want from me?"

"I want nothing from you, but I do want *you*. You see, it's so hard to get children to come to you, to trust you, if all you are is but a humble monster. Do you have any idea how hard it is to make the little brats come to the drains or to the other lovely places when you just scare them?"

"I'd imagine that would be quite difficult."

"See? You agree."

"I agree that it would be hard, and I'm also quite positive I want nothing to do with any of it," Gray snarled, and his voice was hard, his eyes narrowed and decided.

"Aw, that's too bad; you see...I already chose you." It laughed then, deep, chuckling, the sound sort of like the sound dripping water makes in dark empty places. "Hell, I already *have* you." Bob blinked, realizing with a kind of traumatized horror that he couldn't move. "You're bitter, Bob. You're oh so bitter, and angry. Do you know what that does to you, Bob? I'll tell you: it makes you *susceptible*. All your hates, your fears, your lies, your very *existence* and the loss of your family? All sweeteners. It makes it so easy."

"In fact, it's almost too easy...your kind are so...soft. It's incredible. So very incredible how weak you are. But I'm easy. I'll take you anyway. So, let's see how much of a hold I have on you, shall we?"

Bob felt the sick twisted feeling of someone slowly beginning to move his arms and legs, slightly jolting and stilted movements that led to him walking jerkily to where he kept his clown makeup and costume. "Hee hee...this is almost fun; if this is what it's like playing with dolls, I can kinda see what they see in it! Let's try dress up, shall we?" Bob watched in muted horror as his hand reached out, fumbling slightly with the tub of white face paint, the fingers clenching tighter than they needed to, the flash of pain shooting up his arm. "Oo, sorry, didn't mean to hurt ya, we need to keep you in somewhat decent shape for your burial, am I right?" Laughter, bubbling insane laughter, and this came from his own mouth, his own vocal cords pulling harshly on the sound.

He had never been more terrified, never been as close to falling into insanity as he was in that moment. Bob closed his eyes, but he still found himself opening jars, nearly spilling a few of their contents. The giggling that left his mouth was nearly constant, one or two tears squeezing their way out. The sudden shock of cold makeup being applied to his face made his eyes snap open. For a moment he hadn't even been aware of his arms moving, and that frightened him.

His hands began the monotonous, yet familiar task of smearing makeup across his face, rubbing it in, caking it thickly. Only it wasn't that familiar. There were differences in the pattern, where Bob would have never have caked on so much so soon as it only needed to be built on; It wasn't aware of that. The near constant humming and quiet grunting was also something he would have never usually done, and yet here he was, his vocal chords moving and reacting.

"So, Robert Gray, or is it Bob; can I call you Bob? Of course I can; we're friends, right? Well...here's the deal. You're going to come to me. It won't be long now, not long at all, but when you get here, you're going to be mine. I know you're probably upset; being the human that you are you believe that you're entitled to such things as free will, as your own life, but hey, look on the bright side! You're going to be a part of me, and there are lots of perks to that situation."

Gray's eyes closed, the slow start of tears running down his face as his mouth continued moving, the words continuing to pour out of him.

"Hee hee...aww, are we that sad? Come on, I haven't told you the best part...when you're a part of me you can live forever. You'll be a part of me, my host, and you *will* live forever. Aiding me, as I aid you. We will have a symbiotic relationship and you will be powerful. You will command power beyond your wildest dreams. I can even let you see your wife...I can even let you see your child."

Bob blinked, swallowing, his eyes closing as he took a deep breath. "Please...I don't want to..."

"Too bad. You're going to anyway. I spent too much time snaring you. You are mine, and you shall remain mine. Don't worry though; it will be time well spent. I'll give you everything I told you, because I'm just that nice."

The black humor that permeated the speech made Gray certain that It was lying. It wasn't just lying; it was going to destroy him. But there was a part of him, somewhere, that was tempted...could It really give him those things? Could It let him see his family, see what it could have been like? He fought against his natural inclination to grasp the words close to his heart, but no matter how hard he fought, he could not cease dwelling on it, some echoing and leeching quality making him long for it. He wanted that, he wanted his family, and that longing only caused him to be weaker in his own standing, in his own body and mind.

"Good boy, that's what you do. Give me control, give me your wishes, your desires, your dreams, your...*fears*."

Bob felt a throbbing pressure between his ears, his eyes closing as he gripped his head, greasepaint sticking his hair into odd angles, staining it white. He gave a half gasp, half sob, and choked, drool leaking from his mouth as he went slack. His hands came back to his sides, and he reached out again, makeup sifted through calmly.

When he was finished the face was clumsily painted, lacking the finesse that he had struggled so hard to perfect, but it got the job done. Bob closed his eyes against the painted face, the painted-on smile burning on his cheeks. Something that he had once loved for its ability to let him hide his own sorrow from the world would now be used to hide the evil that dwelled within him. He found himself stripping, the silver clown suit shimmering as he put it on, attaching the tufts of hair calmly to his head.

The task done he examined himself quietly, before turning to sit in the middle of the room, his legs crossed. He didn't speak; he barely felt the need to breathe, and rain continued to drum on the roof.

Rain fell, choking the air, stealing sound, fear bubbling in the hearts of those who were inside. There were none left outside, even the homeless having found some shelter for the night. Still the caravan moved, still the animals complained, their calls rising up to the heavens, their reply of more rain unappreciated.

The ground was a muddy soup, sticking to wheels and trying to pull the whole of the caravan to the Earth and under, to be stuck there for

eternity. The Kenduskeag river was flooding, the canal rising rapidly under the assault of such a heavy downpour. Unfortunately, this canal was blocking their only way out. When they had realized their mistake, it was too late, and the way away from it was lost in rivers of mud. Lightning split the air, a branch falling behind them, a loud protest from the animals came before the lot of them were sent off the path, down into the water below, screaming and shouting becoming gurgling.

All the while, Bob sat in the middle of his trailer, painted smile unmoving, even as it began to fill with water.